

## **USFS Collaborative Activities in India**

International Programs of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Department of Agriculture, promotes sustainable forest management and biodiversity conservation internationally. By linking the skills of the field-based staff of the USFS with partners overseas, the Agency can address the most critical forestry issues and concerns. International Programs regularly taps into the Agency's wide range of expertise. Wildlife biologists, forest inventory experts, forest economists, hydrologists, disaster and fire management specialists, and policy makers are among those who comprise the staff of over thirty thousand employees.

Since international cooperation is necessary to sustain the ecological and commercial viability of global forest resources and to conserve biodiversity, most of our work is done in collaboration with other organizations. Our partners include other U.S. government agencies, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. State Department, and the Foreign Agricultural Service; international government agencies; multilateral organization, such as the World Bank and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization; non-government organizations, such as World Wildlife Fund and The Nature Conservancy; and universities both in the U.S. and internationally.

International Programs has recently been working in India, with support from USAID/India and in collaboration with the Indian Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF). In June 2010 USFS led an assessment of opportunities and challenges related to Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) including the role of increasing forest carbon stocks (REDD+ in the Copenhagen Accord) in India in order to help the Mission make strategic programming decisions for their incoming Sustainable Landscapes funding.

The assessment examined national level priorities, forest inventory and monitoring aspects, community level forestry perspectives, enabling environment and incentive structures, REDD+ financing, institutional capacity and capacity-building needs, and what role donors, NGOs and other stakeholders are taking related to REDD+ readiness in India.

The resulting assessment report summarized the challenges and opportunities for REDD+ in India, and recommended strategic approaches and program areas for USAID/India over the short (less than five years) and long term (more than five years). This document is available at [http://www.usaid.gov/in/working\\_with\\_us/pdfs/att\\_1.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/in/working_with_us/pdfs/att_1.pdf).

Following this assessment USFS has continued its discussions with USAID/India and MoEF on how to support REDD+ readiness in India, and will be an implementing partner in the Sustainable Landscapes program. International Programs works in a collaborative manner with all partners. Some of the mechanisms used to support the U.S. government's program goals and meet the needs of our international partners include international seminars, study tours, targeted technical training, assessments, and assistance in research design and execution. Currently there are plans for USFS to host short term trainings in the U.S. on remote sensing and forest inventory for Indian government counterparts, as well as support research collaborations between USFS and MoEF scientists on carbon estimation methodologies in various Indian ecosystems.

More information on the activities and approach of the International Programs Office of the US Forest Service can be found at <http://www.fs.fed.us/global/>.